Sewing love for neighbors near and far during the COVID-19 pandemic

By Emily Love Esworthy, LWR’s Manager for Storytelling and Content

When COVID-19 began making its way through the U.S., Nimisha Dharia had to quit her job at Walmart because she has a pre-existing health condition. She would miss the income, but she knew the busy retail store was not a safe place for her.

Then the global pandemic struck, and it brought with it a host of worries. Her loss of income was just a start. In addition to her own health, Nimisha worries about her husband, who is diabetic.

Still, her first instinct when social distancing began was to find a way to help others.

She used the sewing skills she picked up as a young girl. So far, she’s given away 150 masks to her neighbors by offering them for free via Facebook.

“I don’t want to take money,” she says. “I just want to do a service.”

When Nimisha saw a Facebook ad for the 75,000 Face Mask Challenge, she quickly made a pledge. Growing up in India, she had seen firsthand the plight facing people living in extreme poverty. She had never heard of Lutheran World Relief, but the mission resonated with her.

Though Nimisha continues to worry about COVID-19, as well as her loss of income, she says making masks for neighbors near and far has made her feel “internally satisfied” during this time of uncertainty.
DEAR FRIENDS,

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o much has happened in our world and our ministry since
the last newsletter. First, I want to say I hope and pray
that you and your loved ones are healthy and finding
peace that passes all understanding. Second, I want to
say THANK YOU for so generously continuing to make quilts
and kits (and masks!) for our neighbors around the world
during this time. We need these gifts of love as much as ever.
Finally, I want to tell you about my own experience with the
coronavirus this spring.

I started to feel unwell on Sunday, April 18, and I deteriorated
quickly. On Monday my achy joints worsened, and by Tuesday
it was difficult to breathe. On Wednesday I could no longer
taste or smell, and by that night it felt like I was breathing
through a very thick wool scarf. I was gasping for air. On
Thursday I was tested for COVID-19, and a chest x-ray showed
I had pneumonia. On Saturday I learned my COVID-19 test
was positive.

It was a very scary time. I am not sure if I've ever been sicker,
and laboring to breathe was terrifying.

I am thankful to God that after several days of taking my
prescribed medications, I felt considerably better and
quickly. On Monday my achy joints worsened, and by Tuesday
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We at Lutheran World Relief are sending prayers of
healing, comfort and peace to all those affected by this virus.

Unfortunately, others have suffered far worse symptoms and even death as a result of
COVID-19. We at Lutheran World Relief are sending prayers of
healing, comfort and peace to all those affected by this virus.

I share my story to illustrate why we are urging our
community to take precautions to minimize your risks of
contracting or spreading COVID-19 during Ingatherings
and other ministry-related activities.

Take it from me: this virus is serious, and each of you is
precious to God and to us. Please read on for updates and
tips as we continue to serve our neighbors around the world
with as much love and safety as possible.

WE URGENTLY NEED YOUR INPUT!

These are unprecedented times and your safety is our
top priority. We are considering alternative collection,
ideas, and we need your perspective so we can make the
best decisions for your area.

Please share your thoughts about fall Quilt and
Kit collection at lwr.org/qksurvey.

Thank you. Your input is so important.

GET THE LATEST UPDATES.

Information and guidelines are changing quickly.
Sign up for email updates at lwr.org/ingathering or call
800.597.5972 so we can keep you in the loop.

NOTE: We will not be sending fall
2020 Ingathering postcards.

TIPS FOR A COVID-SAFE INGATHERING

Our neighbors in vulnerable communities desperately
need the quilts and kits that are overflowing your closets
and spare bedrooms. Ingatherings are a critical part
of getting those items where they’re needed most. In June,
Ingathering pioneers in Texas and New Jersey tested new
ways of hosting these critical collections while keeping
donors and volunteers healthy.

In San Antonio, Debra Mattke coordinated a socially
distanced Ingathering. First, she secured a church with
space for over 1,000 boxes, and participants were assigned
appointments to avoid overcrowding during drop-off.
Everyone, from volunteers to those dropping off donations,
were masked. Then, she had an empty trailer dropped off
at the church. The next day, Lutheran World Relief covered
the cost for professional movers (who also wore masks) to
transfer all 1,068 boxes from the church to the trailer, which
the trucking company picked up later that afternoon.

In New Jersey, Arlene Cherwien coordinated the collection
of quilts and school kits donated by three congregations —
Zion Lutheran, Holy Trinity and Redeemer Lutheran — to keep
social distancing manageable. LWR’s Janel Johnson-Momanyi
(fully recovered!) drove the “LWR Van” to Vineland, N.J.,
to collect and transport the donations to the LWR warehouse in
New Windsor, Md.

In fact, we can’t keep up
with demand. We need
you more than ever.
Assembly and shipping instructions at lwr.org/schoolkits.

What to expect at your next Ingathering

We appreciate your graciousness amid the changes to
this year’s Ingatherings, which may include those below.
Additional information specific to your location will be
shared via email, so we encourage you to sign up online at
lwr.org/ingathering to receive updates.

• All volunteers and donors will be asked to RSVP before
attending. This will help to ensure that deliveries are
spaced safely.

• Anyone — even if they are planning to stay in the car —
who is not feeling well, or who has been in recent contact
with someone who is ill, should stay home.

• Some locations will not have volunteers present to
help with unloading. Plan to bring a strong friend to help
unload your boxes and transfer them to the truck or
storage location.

• Wear a mask at all times while you are at
the collection point.

• Limit contact. Avoid handshakes and hugs and
maintain a distance of six feet between individuals.
If volunteers are on hand to unload your boxes,
you may be asked to remain in your car.

• Unfortunately, fellowship events will not be a
part of fall ingatherings this year.

Questions? We are here to help.

If your 2020 Ingathering is postponed or cancelled,
please help us explore alternatives for your area by
completing the quilt and kit survey at lwr.org/qksurvey
or call 800.597.5972.

If you are planning an Ingathering, we can provide
tips and guidance regarding COVID-19. Contact us by
phone or email LWR Quilt & Kit Ministry Manager
Janel Johnson-Momanyi at quiltsandkits@lwr.org.

WE NEED SCHOOL KITS!

The coronavirus crisis has
not slowed down the need
for School Kits.

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Assembly and shipping instructions at
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